

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

NOTICES OF BOOKS.

"*Notes on the Sultanate of Siak*" by H. A. Hymans van Anroij.—Under this title a most interesting treatise on Siak has recently appeared. The writer has been living for years in the Dutch Residency, East Coast of Sumatra, and, as an official in continual contact with the native population, has had better opportunities for prosecuting his researches than a private individual would have had.

Siak is the largest of the Malay Independent States on the East Coast of Sumatra. Its relations to the Dutch are in some degree the same as those of the Malay States of the Peninsula in respect of the English, although probably its independence is greater than that of Pêrak, &c.

A few extracts from this very interesting book will, no doubt, be welcome to the members of the Society.

The Sultan, who is assisted by a minister, the Mangkubumi (formerly Raja Muda), naturally receives the largest part of the taxes due to the Government; he has besides the right to certain prerogatives pertaining exclusively to the Royal Office, amongst which are the so-called *barang larangan* or *larangan raja*.

We find similar prerogatives in Western monarchies, in a different shape.

The principal revenues of the Sultan of Siak are:—

1. The taxes on Imports and Exports collected on the different rivers in his dominions.
2. The tax on the *těrabūk* fishery.
3. A tax on strangers passing through his lands.

4. The monopoly of the sale of opium and salt, and the excise farms generally.
5. Statute labour.
6. A tenth on produce.
7. Money levies on his subjects whenever required.
8. The *serah-an* * trade in some parts of Siak proper, particularly in the Western dependencies.

The first four of the above-named taxes have been taken over, in consideration of a yearly fixed sum, by the Dutch Government, who also dispute the right of the Sultan to the *serah-an* trade in the dependencies.

The Sultan claims further the right to purchase at four-fifths or even at three-fourths of its value all the bees' wax collected in Siak; he may also sell to third persons the right to open settlements and collect produce, &c., on rivers not yet occupied; he may sell licenses for the felling and cutting of wood; and may give out lands for the laying out of plantations, &c.

It is, however, always understood that any rights possessed by native occupants to grounds so disposed of by the Sultan are properly settled for by him.

The above-mentioned *barang larangan* or *larangan raja* are such articles as are considered to be the exclusive property of the Sultan. Whoever collects or becomes possessed of such articles within Siak limits, is bound to give them up to the Sultan. Though not without value, they must be considered *curiosa* rather than *preciosa*, and as such are to be taken less as a source of revenue than as a perquisite of royalty. They are:—*Gading* (ivory), *sumbok badak* (rhinoceros horn), *guliga* (bezoar), *gaharu merupa*, *chula tupei*, *jaring napoh* and *musang chabu*, and, to a certain degree, camphor. (This latter article is however treated somewhat differently, as will be shown further on.)

Of every male elephant, killed or found dead in the jungle, one of the tusks is to be given to the Sultan, the second remaining the property of the finder. Should the Sultan wish

* The "*serah-an*" trade is a monopoly for the sole right of the sale of salt and iron (particularly tools like *parangs*, &c.).—F. K.

to have the second tusk too, he must pay the usual market price for it.

The finder or hunter gets in exchange for the first tusk a set of new clothing (*per-salin-an*).

Ivory sells in Siak at different prices, according to the different size of the tusks. If the pair weighs above one *pikul*, the price is \$250 per *pikul*; where the weight is about half a *pikul* for both tusks the price is \$150 for the pair; smaller tusks fetch \$1 per *kati*.

Every rhinoceros' horn found is considered the property of the Sultan. The finder gets for it a *per-salin-an*. This article is in great request by the natives as medicine, and is said by them to be particularly efficacious in wounds and snake-bites.

Its value is on the average from \$20 to \$60.

A great rarity is a white horn, for which Chinese will pay as much as \$100.

The general opinion is that the difference between the rhinoceros of Java and that of Sumatra consists in the former having two horns and the latter one only. I am, however, informed on good authority that rhinoceroses with two horns are sometimes, though rarely, met with in Siak.

Guliga,* or Bezoar stone, is a stone found in the intestines of certain animals—bears, monkeys, serpents, porcupines and others.

The *guliga* in Siak, which is considered to belong to the *larangan raja* is an intestinal stone found in a kind of porcupine living principally in the upper reaches of the Mandau. The Sakeis living in this region are the only persons who collect these stones, which they deliver to the Sultan partly as a revenue, partly as *barang larangan*.

By right, all the *guligas* found by them are the Sultan's, the greater number, however, are clandestinely sold to Malay and Chinese traders.

According to their size, they are worth from \$40 to \$600 a piece.

* See "On the *Guliga* of Borneo" in No. 4 of this Journal 56-58,—F. K.

Their value, however, does not merely rise with their weight, but, as in the case of precious stones, rises out of all proportion with the mere increase in weight. A *guliga* weighing 1 *ringgit* (8 *mayam*) costs \$600, whereas one of the weight of 3 *mayam* will only be worth \$100.

For *guligas*, particularly large ones, extraordinary prices are sometimes paid. The Sultan of Siak possesses one said to be valued at \$900.

Natives maintain that they are an almost infallible medicine in cases of chest or bowel complaints, but their principal value is founded on their reputed virtue as a powerful aphrodisiac. To operate in this way, one is worn on the navel tied up in a piece of cloth, or water in which one has been soaked is drunk.

The *gaharu merupa* is a piece of strangely formed *gáharu* wood having a rough resemblance to some living creature, be it a bird, a dog, a cat or something else.

The writer of these lines has never been able to see one of these *gaharu merupa*, and it would seem that none have been found in Siak in recent times.

The power which it is believed to possess rests on the supposition that it is the spirit of the *kayu gaharu*. With it in hand, the holder is sure to make large finds of *gáharu* wood in the jungle.

The *gaharu* wood is not the wood of a tree named *gaharu*, but is the product of a tree of the name of *karas*. When this tree has died of old age and has fallen in the jungle, the wood, by some chemical process, forms into the substance known as *kayu gaharu*. Not all dead *karas* trees, however, contain *gaharu* wood, whereas some will yield as much as two *pikuls*. Peculiar qualifications are required before a man can tell beforehand whether a log will contain any of the treasured odorific wood. The persons who possess the power of foretelling this are called *pawang*. The same name is used for people able to find other products. To find, for instance, with any certainty and quickly, articles like tin or camphor, a person must be a *pawang*.

Gaharu wood fetches \$0.50 to \$1.00 a *kati*, according to quality.

The *chula tupei* is the dried penis of the *tupei*, a kind of squirrel. Malays say that the dead body of the *tupei* is sometimes found with this organ held fast in a cleft of a cocoa-nut tree or bamboo.

I must leave it to others, better judges than myself, to say whether such a thing is possible.

Malays believe that the *chula tupei* is a very strong aphrodisiac, so strong that even to carry one has an effect.

The *taring napoh* is the eye-tooth, grown in ring form, of a *napoh*, a dwarf deer (in size between the *pelanduk* (*kanchil*) and the *kijang*), an animal which it appears is only found in Sumatra and surrounding islands.

The *taring* is worn as a ring, and forms what Malays call a *pēlias*, namely a protection which renders its bearer invulnerable. They are very rare. Another *pēlias*, which however is no *barang larangan*, is the *semambu* * *songsang*, that is a *semambu* which is deformed or presents some peculiarity of growth; another is *buntat tumbok nyiur*, part of the kernel of a cocoa-nut turned to stone.

The *musang chabu* is a white *musang*, which whenever found is the Sultan's. It seems, however, to have no further useful quality than its extreme rarity. It appears to be so rare indeed that the writer has never found anybody who has seen one.

The camphor is so far considered as a *barang larangan* that nobody is allowed to go and collect it without having a special permit from the Sultan. This permit is only given after the Sultan has made sure that a good *pawang* accompanies the party, a man who is able to know from the outside of a tree whether it contains camphor or not.

The gratuity to be given to the *pawang* is not fixed by law, but is settled beforehand on every expedition, also the share of the Sultan.

The regulations which have to be observed when collecting camphor are most strange, for instance, those who go on the

* *Semambu*—better *rotan semambu*—is a rattan commonly known as Malacca cane.—F. K.

expedition, are not permitted during the whole time of its duration to wash or bathe; they have to use a peculiar language, which differs from ordinary Malay. Compare what is known on this point of similar usages amongst the Battaks.

The collectors have to go on through the jungle until the *hantu kapur* (the camphor spirit), a female, appears to the *parwang* in his dreams and shows him the direction in which success may be expected.

Certain customs are observed in Siak in the collection of wax which may be mentioned here.

The *sialang* (that is, a tree on which bees have made nests) is generally considered to belong to him who finds it, provided it stands in a part of the forest belonging to his tribe. Should the tree stand in a part of the jungle apportioned to another tribe, the finder is permitted to take for once all the wax there is on the tree, and ever afterwards during his lifetime all the wax of one branch of the tree. After his death the tree again becomes the property of the tribe to whom that part of the jungle belongs.

When wax is collected from a tree, there are generally three persons to share in it, and the proceeds are divided as follows:—viz., one-third to the proprietor of the tree, one-third to the man who climbs the tree, and one-third to the man who keeps watch below. These two latter offices are considered rather dangerous; the first because he has to climb the towering *sialang* trees, branchless to a considerable height, by means of bamboo pegs driven into the trunk; and the watch-keeper underneath, because he has to face the bears and tigers who (so it is said) come after the wax and honey.

The following trees are generally inhabited by bees (*lebah*), and then become *sialangs*; near the sea, *pulei*, *kempas*, *kayu arah* and *babi kurus*; whilst further in the interior *ringas manuk*, and *chempedak ayer* are their generally habitats.

Besides the *lebah*, there is to be found in Siak another bee, called *neruan*, which does not make its nests on trees, but in holes.

The regulations observed when taking the wax of the *lebah* do not apply to the taking of the wax and honey of the *neruan*.

Anybody is at liberty to look for them wherever and whenever he likes.

F. KEHDING.

THE ALPHABETS OF THE PHILIPPINE GROUP.

PARDO DE TAVERA's Essay on the Alphabets of the Philippines* was thus reviewed in March, 1885, by Professor MÜLLER of Vienna :—

“Those of the inhabitants of the Philippines who belong to the Malay race possess, as is well known, their own particular alphabet, but it has become more and more obsolete, and has been superseded by the Roman character brought into the country by the Spanish missionaries together with the Christian religion. This alphabet which preserves its principal characteristics among the different tribes—the Tagalas, the Ylocos, the Visayas, and the Pampangas—is connected with the alphabet of cognate races in Celebes (Bugis, Makassar), and Sumatra (Battak, Redjang, Lampong), while both its external form (the shaping of the characters) and its internal design (the conception of the proportion of consonant to vowel) seem to point to India as its place of origin. But whether the alphabet of the Malay races has been derived from the Indian in a straight line, or whether it has been deduced from it by the intervention of another alphabet and what Indian alphabet (that is, the alphabet of what province and of what era) has been the foundation of the Malay ones—these are questions answered differently by different philologists, and have therefore at present to be treated as open ones.”

“It would take us too far afield to go into these topics, but we venture to direct the attention of those readers who take a pleasure in following out this paleographically and ethnographically interesting problem, to certain pamphlets in

* *Contribucion para el estudio de los antiguos alfabetos filipinos*, (1884).